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Chem-Bio News

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5. SCIENTIST CONCEDES 'HONEST MISTAKE' ABOUT WEAPONIZED ANTHRAX: *"Peter B. Jahrling, who aided the federal probe of the 2001 mailings, says he erred when he told White House officials that material he examined probably had been altered to make it more deadly."*

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Chem-Demil News

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CB Daily Report

Chem-Bio News

AUSTRALIA BOOSTS BIO-SECURITY DEFENSES

By Phil Mercer

newsVOA.com

September 16, 2008

"Australia has opened a new National Center for Bio-Security to build its defenses against infectious diseases and biological weapons."

"The facility's co-director, Dr. Christian Enemark, says researchers will be on the frontline of efforts to prevent the use of such potentially devastating diseases in conflict."

"The new bio-security unit is a joint venture between the Australian National University in Canberra and the University of Sydney. It will tap into the expertise of 50 researchers from a range of disciplines, whose job is to provide "independent and fearless" advice to politicians about biological security.

Scientists at the new center also will seek to bolster Australia's defenses against infectious diseases such as SARS - severe acute respiratory syndrome."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-09-16-voa8.cfm>

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LAWMAKERS ARE SEEKING ANSWERS IN ANTHRAX CASE

By Carrie Johnson
The Washington Post
September 16, 2008

"The strength of the government's evidence against Bruce E. Ivins, who died before prosecutors publicly labeled him the lone culprit in the 2001 anthrax-by-mail attacks, will be tested anew today when FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III appears before the House Judiciary Committee."

"Last week, staff members for Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) pressed U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Taylor and two FBI officials to say when the anthrax case will be closed and why investigators had fixed on Ivins six months after notifying him in April 2007 that he was not a target. Investigators told congressional aides that they are still pursuing leads in the "Amerithrax" investigation, sources said."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/15/AR2008091502996.html>

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FBI SEEKS INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF ANTHRAX PROBE

By Robert Roos
CIDRAP News (Center for Infectious Disease Research & Policy – University of Minnesota)
September 16, 2008

"The FBI plans to ask the National Academy of Sciences to review the bureau's investigation that led to its conclusion that government microbiologist Bruce E. Ivins committed the 2001 anthrax attacks, FBI Director Robert Mueller III told Congress today.

Mueller's revelation before the House Judiciary Committee comes in the wake of doubts expressed by a number of scientists about the FBI's findings and calls from several experts for an independent review of the bureau's work in the case."

"Since then, a number of disease and biodefense experts have said it is not possible to judge the FBI's claim about the genetic match without seeing the full scientific details, which have not been released. In addition, a number of observers have raised questions about other aspects of the case, such as how the FBI eliminated a large number of other USAMRIID workers who had access to the anthrax in Ivins' work area.

Another question is whether the anthrax powder used in the attacks was a simple preparation of dried anthrax spores or a special weaponized preparation. Early in the investigation, the FBI suggested that the spores were specially treated to make them spread more easily through the air and into the lungs, implying that it would have been difficult for one person to produce them. But at an Aug 18 press conference, FBI experts said they had determined that making the anthrax was a fairly simple process. They said that silica found in the powder occurred naturally, not as a special additive."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/bt/anthrax/news/sep1608anthrax.html>

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NEW ZEALAND LAUNCHES COUNTERPROLIFERATION DRILL

Global Security Newswire

September 16, 2008

"New Zealand was set to begin searching ships for potential WMD ingredients and equipment today in a five-day exercise aimed at evaluating the island nation's counterproliferation capabilities, the New Zealand Press Association reported.

The drill, dubbed Exercise Maru, is being conducted in the Haruaki Gulf under the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative, a group of more than 85 nations seeking to block transfers of WMD materials.

"The exercise will have a strong law enforcement focus on preventing the proliferation of WMD-related materials across our borders, including examining the legal issues which arise after a WMD item has been intercepted," said Robert Lake, deputy comptroller of operations for the New Zealand Customs Service."

The full article can be found at: http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2008_9_15.html

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SCIENTIST CONCEDES 'HONEST MISTAKE' ABOUT WEAPONIZED ANTHRAX

By David Willman
The Los Angeles Times
September 16, 2008

"Peter B. Jahrling, who aided the federal probe of the 2001 mailings, says he erred when he told White House officials that material he examined probably had been altered to make it more deadly."

"On Oct. 24, 2001, Jahrling was summoned to the White House after reporting to his superiors what he believed to be signs that silicon had been added to anthrax recovered from a letter addressed to then-Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.).

The presence of silicon was viewed with alarm because the material, if artificially added to the anthrax, would make it more buoyant in air and more capable of penetrating deeply into the lungs.

"I believe I made an honest mistake," Jahrling said in response to questions e-mailed to him for this article, adding that he had been "overly impressed" by what he thought he saw under the microscope.

"I should never have ventured into this area," said Jahrling, who is a virologist, referring to his analysis of the anthrax, which is a bacterium. Jahrling's initial analysis -- and his briefing of officials at the White House -- was first detailed in a 2002 book by bestselling author Richard Preston."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-anthrax17-2008sep17,0,1753550.story>

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TERRORISM FEAR COULD CREATE PSYCHOSOMATIC EPIDEMIC, FEDS WARN

By Ryan Singel
Wired.com
September 14, 2008

"Americans' fear of a terrorism could create a mass outbreak of a psychosomatic illness -- even in the absence of any real attack -- -- creating a fake epidemic that could overwhelm hospitals attempting to treat real victims.

Adding to the confusion, the symptoms of a mass psychogenic illness look much like symptoms of an anthrax attack, avian flu outbreak or chemical attack."

"Call it a contagious psychosomatic illness -- though the feds preferred to label the phenomenon "psychogenic illness," defining that as:

A phenomenon in which social trauma or anxiety combines with a suspicious event to produce psychosomatic symptoms, such as nausea, difficulty breathing, and paralysis. If many individuals come to believe that the psychosomatic outbreak is connected to the cause of the trauma or anxiety, these symptoms can spread rapidly throughout a population.

In fact, the feds suggest (.pdf) that there's already been a totally terrorism-fear-created illness in California where no one was actually sick from an attack.

In that case, a man walked into a California bank in October 2003, sprayed an aerosol can into the air and then left. Employees and customers became ill, though investigators found there were no biological or chemical agents in the air. (Note proof of this incident is attributed to a November 2003 FBI report that is also considered too sensitive for the public's eyes.)"

The full article can be found at: <http://blog.wired.com/27bstroke6/2008/09/terrorism-fear.html>

The referenced Federal article can be found at: <http://blog.wired.com/27bstroke6/files/dhs-mass-psychogenic-illness-2006.pdf>

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Chem-Demil News

MOCK EMERGENCIES ALLOW AGENCIES TO TUNE RESPONSE

By Sarah Miley

TranscriptBulletin.com

September 11, 2008

"Emergency responders were out in full force yesterday, responding to a simulated natural disaster and several emergencies as part of annual Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program exercises.

The exercises involved roughly 500 personnel from more than 20 local, state and federal agencies and departments, and spanned areas across Tooele County.

CSEPP, which was instigated in 1988, coordinates various agencies with the intent of improving the emergency response capabilities of communities that surround sites with chemical weapons stockpiles."

"The initiating event of Wednesday's exercises was a morning simulation at DCD involving

four one-ton containers of liquid mustard agent being moved from one igloo to another. Three had already been loaded onto a flatbed truck, but when the fourth was being loaded, a plug popped out and agent started leaking and spraying out. Also, unrelated to the leak, was a fire that was sparked in the truck at the same time. Those events resulted in simulated injuries that had to be treated by responders."

The full article can be found at: http://www.transcriptbulletin.com/prINTER_friendly/220476

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